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TAGS: ECON ELNT EAID PREL PGOV SU
SUBJECT: GoSS ASKS FOR HELP WITH ROADS

¶11. (U) This is an action request - see para. 8.

¶12. (SBU) Summary: On February 22, GoSS Minister of Roads and Transport David Deng Athorbei paid a call on the Congen to request assistance with the purchase of road building equipment that he said is urgently needed to open up a new road connecting Southern Sudan to Ethiopia and Djibouti. The GoSS, he said, is increasingly worried about instability in Kenya and the reliability of Mombassa as a port for the shipment of critically needed supplies to the South. Already Southern Sudan is suffering sharply rising prices for such commodities as fuel and bread because of the difficulties in Kenya, and the GoSS feels it needs to have alternative transportation options to protect itself from future problems. End Summary.

¶13. (SBU) The Minister presented the Congen with a letter and an attachment outlining a request for \$4.3 million worth of road building equipment. The equipment is urgently needed to complete construction of a new highway to the Ethiopian border. The Ethiopians, in order to encourage trade with Southern Sudan, are in the process of completing a new road into the South, and the Minister indicated that when it was completed inside Ethiopia they had agreed to build another 50 kilometers of it on the Sudanese side of the border if the GoSS would supply them with the petrol needed to perform the work. However, that still left about 45 kilometers of new road that the GoSS will have to build on its own to complete the project.

¶14. (SBU) The Minister said that recent unrest in Kenya had awakened the GoSS to the urgent need to expand its transportation infrastructure so that the South was not totally dependent on Kenya for nearly all of its critically needed imports. Already, the South has been seriously affected by the problems in Kenya and is now paying much higher prices for such commodities as fuel and even bread. The GoSS has to develop, he said, alternative transportation routes so as not to leave itself vulnerable to the instability of its neighbors. The GoSS, he also indicated, was very pessimistic about the future stability of Kenya.

¶15. (SBU) The Congen also remarked that he had heard that some SPLA military supplies had been seized by the GOK, and wondered if that was not also a motivating factor in seeking an alternate port to Mombassa. The Minister admitted that it was, and the feeling in the South was that the Ethiopians would be more helpful in this regard.

¶16. (SBU) The Congen commented that it sm
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intensive maintenance? The Minister responded that the GoSS understood that and had started programs to train the mechanics needed, and had set aside a half million dollars with which to buy spare parts when the equipment was purchased.

¶17. (SBU) Asked why the GoSS simply did not hire the work done, the Minister complained that their past contracts with foreign road building companies had not been satisfactory. The GoSS considered

that it had been taken advantage of, and felt it urgently needed to develop its own capacity to build road infrastructure.

¶18. (SBU) Comment and Action Request: It is understandable why the GoSS wants to create a wider based, more reliable transportation infrastructure that does not hold it hostage to developments in any one of its neighbors. They are highly vulnerable to the current unrest in Kenya, which has had a major negative impact on their economy. The request for assistance was delivered by the Congen to USAID, but he was told it was highly unlikely USAID would be able to honor it. However, a transportation route into Ethiopia is a critical economic and security requirement for the GoSS. If any ESF funds could be used for this purpose, Post suggests that serious consideration be given to providing the assistance. Reducing the isolation of the South and building its economy both helps it to deal from a position of strength with the NCP, which uses just these kinds of vulnerabilities to its advantage, and it will reduce the effects of regional instability on the Southern Sudan.

FERNANDEZ